

# OBADIAH

**The Man:** Nothing is known about Obadiah. He is named in the opening sentence: “The vision of Obadiah.” [1a] The 21 verses of this book are the shortest and sternest prophecy in the Old Testament.

**The Times:** The Edomites (Esau’s descendants) had feuded with the Israelites (Jacob’s descendants) for centuries. Their assistance to the Babylonians during the siege of Jerusalem that preceded the Exile was considered especially heinous. Early in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century B.C., Arabian enemies had dislodged the Edomites from their highland territories, driving them to southern Judah. Obadiah is overjoyed at the turn of the Edomites’ fortune.

**The Message:** The oracle against Edom [1-14, 15b] dates from c. 475-450 B.C. and is a bitter denunciation of the Edomites, rejoicing in their imminent downfall. The oracle of final victory [15a, 16-21] is a later composition, dating c. 425-400 B.C. It anticipates the defeat of not only the Edomites, but also the Gentile enemies of Israel, and looks forward to the restoration of the Lord’s Kingdom throughout the Promised Land.

## Prophetic Themes in Obadiah

**Authority:** “Of Edom we have heard a message from the Lord ... “ [1c]

**Specific Sins:** Edom’s pride and its collaboration with Babylon have caused the Lord to bring about its downfall: [3, 10-14]

**Judgment:** The Lord will bring Edom down [2, 4], a fitting vengeance for its evil: “As you have done, so shall it be done to you.” [15b]

**Remnant:** “On Mount Zion there shall be a portion saved.” [17a]

**Day of the Lord = Salvation:** The Edomites and the Gentiles will suffer on the Day of the Lord, but the Israelites shall experience victory, again occupying all the territory of the Promised Land as the Kingdom of the Lord: [17-21]

## Readings at Mass

No selections from the Book of Obadiah are used at Mass.